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Early Persians' Interest in History

A. S H. S H A H B A Z I

Professor Richard N. Frye's well-known interest in Iranian history affords this Persian an occasion to contribute, as a token of admiration, a portion of his *A History of Iranian Historiography** to the eminent scholar's *Festschrift*. The article deals with the Achaemenid Persians' methods of preserving the memory of their forefathers, which assumed three forms: oral tradition, saga illustrations, and written records. Only the first two categories are discussed here.

Herodotus opens his great work on the Greco-Persian war by recording the traditions which sought to explain its causes.¹ "The Persians best informed in history² claim," he relates, that the Phoenicians began the quarrel by abducting Io, the daughter of Inachus, king of Argos, to Egypt, in retaliation for which certain Greeks carried away Europa, a Phoenician princess. Afterwards the Greeks committed a second violence when they sailed to a Colchis city and bore off its princess, Medea, and refused to repair this outrage; but, when avenging this, Alexander, a son of Priam, seduced Helen of Sparta, the Greeks reacted foolishly and invaded Asia with a vast armada and destroyed the kingdom of Priam. Since the Persians regarded Asia with all its various inhabitants as their own,³ they argued that by so doing the Greeks had in truth harmed Persia⁴ and initiated hostilities.⁵

This testimony reveals the interest with which the Persians treated ancient events and their zeal for peering into the past through sagas and traditions. They carefully preserved the memory of their forebears, at least from the time of Achaemenes, whom they regarded as the founder of their kingdom.⁶ Thus, Darius the Great proudly proclaimed:⁷

We are called Achaemenids. From long ago we have been noble. From long ago our family has been royal . . .

VIII [members] of our family have been kings; I am the ninth; nine kings in two lines.

He also hints at his long historical heritage: having given an account of nineteen battles that he had won and nine kings that he had smitten, Darius remarks that former kings did not achieve in their lifetimes what he had accomplished within one year.⁸

Gathering Materials

The Achaemenid Persians had diverse sources from which to derive information regarding the historical background of their various subjects. That some versions of certain eastern Iranian sagas were known to them, probably through their priests⁹ and court minstrels¹⁰ is shown by their adoption of such "Avestan" names as Vištāspa,¹¹ Hutaosā (Atossa¹²), (Damaspia,¹³ fem. form of Zāmāspa¹⁴) Spənto.dāta (Spendadates¹⁵), Pišyōθna (Pisuthnes¹⁶), and Yima Xšaēta.¹⁷ It is also certain that the ruling class of Persians were not wholly ignorant of the history of Babylonia,¹⁸ Egypt,¹⁹ and the Eastern Greeks,²⁰ and used their knowledge politically when the need arose. Indeed, their desire to know renowned foreign men²¹ and lands²² is well attested. Understandably, the Persians were mainly interested in preserving the memory of their own achievements, especially in recounting or recording the exploits of their kings and heroes. In this the Persians were prone to exaggerate calamities, magnify worthy deeds, and romanticize tales, and these tendencies, which varied in degree, frequently resulted in the creation of several versions of a single tradition. Thus Herodotus was obliged to explain:²³

I shall follow those Persian authorities whose object it appears to be not to magnify the exploits of Cyrus, but

to relate the simple truth. I know besides three ways in which the story of Cyrus is told, all differing from my own narration.²⁴

Similarly:²⁵

Of the many different accounts which are given on the death of Cyrus, this which I followed appears to me the most worthy of credit.

The existence in Achaemenid Persia of diverse versions of historical traditions evidently encouraged Ctesias to gratify his desire to contradict Herodotus by writing a remarkably inaccurate *History of Persia* (*Persica*, now preserved only in fragments) and insisting upon having drawn upon Persian sources. His *Persica* was in twenty-three books, the first six on Assyrian and pre-Persian history, the rest about Persian affairs.²⁶ Photius, who used the *Persica* extensively, says:²⁷

In nearly all points he [i.e., Ctesias] gives an account opposed to that of Herodotus, whom he even accuses of having been a liar in many particulars and whom he calls a deviser of fables. Not only is Ctesias later than Herodotus, but he declares that he was either an eye-witness of most of the events that he relates, or else had heard directly from the Persians themselves in cases where personal observation was impossible and that these were the sources from which he composed his history. He not only contradicts Herodotus but also differs with Xenophon in some points.

The sources of these "Persian authorities" can be examined under the headings of oral traditions, official records, and illustrations of sagas.

Oral Traditions

The old custom of preserving the memories of renowned men and nations and embellishing them with fabulous and often dramatized tales was kept up by the Achaemenid Iranians, especially by the Persians. As in the old days, the backbone of oral traditions was poetry, wherein the exploits of ancestors were told to encourage similar deeds among the contemporaries. G. Rawlinson's study of Herodotus led him to infer:²⁸

... that the Persian authors to whom he [Herodotus] refers in several places as authorities on the subject of their early national history were poets, the composers of those national songs of which Xenophon, Strabo and

other writers speak, wherein were celebrated the deeds of the ancient kings and heroes, and particularly those of the hero-founder of the Empire, Cyrus.

The inferences that some of the Herodotan tales on Persian subjects were ultimately based on poetic songs is defensible. After remarking that the ancient Greeks had been music lovers and that their poets had put to song-music the praise of the gods, Athenaeus adds,²⁹ "This custom was kept up also among the barbarians, as Dinon declares in his Persian History."³⁰ He then quotes from Dinon an episode wherein court minstrels (on whom see below) praised the courage of Cyrus and foresaw his wars with his overlord Astyages. Similarly, Xenophon testifies that in his own time:³¹

And even to this day the barbarians tell in story and in song that Cyrus was most handsome in person, most generous of heart, most devoted to learning, and most ambitious, so that he endured all sorts of labour and faced all sorts of danger for the sake of praise.

Indeed, oral traditions recounting major episodes of the past and contemporary history constituted the means of instruction to Persian children:

The Persians from five years of age to twenty-four are trained to use the bow, to throw the javelin, to ride horseback and to speak the truth; and they use as teachers of science their wisest men who also interweave their teachings with the mythical elements, thus reducing that element to a useful purpose, and rehearse both with song and without song the deeds both of the gods and of the noblest men.³²

To judge from the testimonies of Dinon, Strabo, and Xenophon, and drawing upon later traditions, we can safely infer that the transferers and propagators of such materials were singers and musicians, i.e., the court minstrels. In a Manichaean Parthian document of the fourth to fifth centuries A.D., as well as in later Iranian literature, such minstrels are called *gōsān*.³³ In that Parthian source the term is defined as he "who proclaims the worthiness of kings and heroes (*šhrdʾrʾn ʾwd kwʾn*)³⁴ of old," which is similar to what Strabo says about the royal tutors of the Persians who "rehearsed both with songs and without songs the deeds both of the gods and of the noblest men." Again, among the arts that royal concubines were often required to master were singing and the

playing of musical instruments;³⁵ while the king dined, they sang or played the lyre, one solo and the other in chorus.³⁶ Ctesias testifies that this was not restricted to the royal court. Whenever Amarus, satrap of Babylonia, sat at dinner, he tells us, "a hundred and fifty women played on harps and sang for him" (Frag. 52). Such songs, it may be confidently conjectured, included historic tales told in ballads or epical versions.³⁷ Personal valor and noble exploits were highly praised, as were heroic devotion to king and country. Not only were the notable deeds of Iranians celebrated, but the achievement of foreigners were likewise admired. Remarkable muscular strength and physical perfection were much appreciated,³⁸ and some form of hero-worship developed.³⁹ By the end of the Achaemenid period a rich oral literature had been created which embraced a good deal of historical tales woven around Iranians and their neighbors. In the accumulation of this heritage not only Iranian materials, but also alien sources were utilized.⁴⁰ Use was made of supernatural elements in Iranian folklore and these were often blended with non-Iranian substances.⁴¹ The composers of historical fables were not much concerned with geographical and historical accuracy, and the custom of reattributing an old story to a new hero was frequently followed.

Unfortunately, none of the sagas of the Achaemenid Iranians has directly come down to us; those that have survived have been profoundly colored by later adaptors and final reductions. Still, an examination of our sources readily shows the richness of Iranian oral traditions that one can trace in written sources. Some of these traditions were so significant that they persisted even after the fall of the Achaemenids, having been merely transferred to their illustrious inheritors. As we will meet them again and again in the course of Persian history, it would be useful to refer to them at this juncture.

An heroized figure was Achaemenes, the eponymous founder of the Persian royal house.⁴² Well aware of their racial affinities with the Hellenes,⁴³ the Persians claimed that Achaemenes was descended from Perses, a child of Perseus, whom the Dorian Greeks regarded as their first sovereign.⁴⁴ It was also asserted that Achaemenes was nursed by an eagle,⁴⁵ the bird that symbolized the might of the Persian empire.⁴⁶

The Medes had their own hero-founder. In the old days, when they lived in scattered villages, Deioces, a noble Mede who was endowed with

much wisdom, started as an honest and upright judge, gained the confidence and devotion of his fellow citizens, and became a ruler in his region. Convinced that "justice and injustice are engaged in perpetual war with each other," he administered his followers' affairs with fairness and understanding and brought about a period of peace and prosperity. Then he withdrew from public affairs, and lawlessness broke out anew. To prevent complete anarchy a Median assembly proffered the sovereignty over Media to Deioces. He accepted, set up a court, and built "a strong and large palace" and the city of Agbatana. This latter was erected on a gentle hill, with seven strong walls each of which out-topped the one beyond it by its battlements. The outer wall's battlements were white, those of the second black, the third scarlet, the fourth blue, the fifth orange, the sixth coated with silver, and those of the seventh coated with gold. His palace and treasury were within the last wall. He created institutions for administering the affairs of his realm and established the law that forbade the king to be seen or contacted directly by his subjects. Thus he gathered the Medes into a nation and ruled over them alone.⁴⁷

An elaborate chain of tales surrounded the figure of Cyrus the Great, the most revered of all Persian kings. Of these a few need special investigation. He was the son of Cambyses, king of Persis, and Mandana, daughter of Astyages, the last Median king. Forewarned by a dream that his grandchild would replace him, Astyages ordered a noble kinsman, Harpagus, to destroy the child of Mandana. Harpagus gave the infant to a shepherd with orders to expose him on a mountain, and the shepherd did so. But the child was miraculously saved by a bitch (Spaka; a later version makes this word the name of the shepherd's wife). The child grew up to be a brave and handsome man, who wrested the kingship from Astyages and united the Medes and Persians into one world empire. In this story the miracle was the work of the god Miθra, but a rationalized version made two changes: the bitch was replaced by a woman whose name happened to be a word (Spaka) meaning "bitch"; and the shepherd was given a name, Mithradates, which happened to signify "created by Miθra."⁴⁸

Another favorite tale relates how, as the child of a poor layman, Cyrus played that he was a king. The boys of his own age chose him to be their king; Cyrus "proceeded to order them about—some he set to build him houses, others he made

his guards, one of them was to be the King's eye, another the King's messenger"; all attended to him except the son of a noble Mede, who refused to carry out an order and was severely punished. The boy's father complained to Astyages, the cruel king of Media, who, after recognizing Cyrus' royal descent, sent him away to Persis. Cyrus revolted soon afterwards and with the help of Astyages' wise chief minister, Harpagus, gained the throne and did away with Astyages.⁴⁹ This story was told to Herodotus, probably by the descendants of Harpagus,⁵⁰ but was kept alive in Pars where we encounter it again in the ninth century A.D., then told of the boy named 'Azod [al-Dawlah].⁵¹

Yet another much admired tale told how Cyrus lived in Media as a youth, how he entered the service of King Astyages, and how he fled to Persia and rose against his overlord. This Cyrus had previously been chief of the royal rod-bearers and later commander of the guard; because of his able and ambitious character he aroused fear and suspicion in Astyages who therefore readily gave him permission to go to Persis and visit his parents:⁵²

Dinon says: then Cyrus departed; Astyages thereupon celebrated a feast in company with his friends, and on that occasion a man named Angares, who was the most distinguished singer, was invited. He not only began to sing other customary songs but also, at the last, he told how a mighty beast had been let loose in the swamp, bolder than a wild boar; which beast if it got the mastery of the region round it, would soon contend against a multitude without difficulty. And when Astyages asked, "What beast?" Angares replied, "Cyrus, the Persian." Believing therefore that his suspicion about him had been correct, he kept summoning him to return . . . but it did no good.

Another story told about Cyrus was that of his capture of Sardis with the help of Nanis, the daughter of Croesus:⁵³

For when Cyrus was besieging Sardis, all his effort towards taking the city were fruitless, he was much afraid that Croesus might muster his allies again and disperse his army. Then, they said, this girl made an agreement with Cyrus to betray Sardis on condition that he take her as his wife in the Persian manner. At the very top of the citadel where no one was guarding the place because of its strength, she admitted the enemy with the help of accomplices. But Cyrus did not make good his promise.

Cambyzes was, according to one story, the rightful king of Egypt.⁵⁴ Amasis, an Egyptian general, had rebelled against his overlord Arties, killed him and enslaved his household. Long afterwards, the king of Persia (one version had Cyrus; a Persianized version substituted Cambyzes) asked the hand of Amasis' daughter. Wishing neither to give his daughter as a concubine nor to anger the Persian king, Amasis sent him Nitatis, daughter of the overthrown Apries. The issue of this union became the sovereign of Persia, and, claiming the kingship of Egypt as his right through his mother's line, he conquered that country.⁵⁵

On the whole, one sees that the Persian history before Darius is shrouded in various legends, whereas after the reestablishment of order by him, stories decrease both in number and in fabulous character. This difference reflects the effect of written records, which systematically increased in volume and subject after the invention of the Old Persian cuneiform script under Darius and the further development and enrichment of archives.⁵⁶ Still, the reign of Darius is also veiled in some traditions, of which two may be examined here, one concerning his accession and the other his campaign against the Sakas of Central Asia.

According to Herodotus,⁵⁷ Darius with six Persians of the noblest families assassinated the false Smerdis in a "citadel," and he then persuaded his helpers of the advantages of the Persian system over the Hellenic type of "democracy." The seven decided to ride out together the next morning into a field, and "he whose steed first neighed after the sun was up should have the kingdom." At night, Darius' groom Obares let his horse come together with a mare at the appointed spot. At dawn on the following morning the seven rode thither and Darius' charger recognized the place and neighed. "Just at the same time, despite the clear and bright sky, there came a flash of lightning, followed by a thunderclap. It was as if the heavens conspired with Darius, and hereby inaugurated him king." Thus Darius ascended the throne and henceforth the day of the assassination of the false Smerdis was celebrated as the greatest Persian festival.⁵⁸ Such festivals do not disappear even when their causes are forgotten. It was assimilated into and has continued under the name of Miθrakāna/Mihrgān,⁵⁹ which, according to the later Persians, was the day when the young Iranian Prince Frēdūn finally vanquished the usurper Aždahāg in a "citadel" and rescued

the two princesses whom Aždahāg had married.⁶⁰ He founded a great festival and was crowned king of Iran. The story of the horse's neighing seems to be a distorted version of a tradition according to which Ādur Gušnasp approved the choice of a virtuous Iranian prince against his rival kinsmen.⁶¹

The second tradition about Darius is known from a later account, given by Polyaeus.⁶² Darius waged a campaign against the Eastern Sakas. Their kings retired to prepare a plan of defense.

Then a certain stable-keeper, Siraces by name, was introduced to them. He proposed himself to destroy the Persian force, if they would pledge themselves to him by oath to give to his children and family all the horses and treasures that from the destruction of the enemy should fall into their hands. They agreed. He therefore withdrew his knife, cut off his nose and ears, maiming himself also in other parts of the body; and thus disfigured, deserted to Darius who gave credit to the complaints of the cruel treatments which he said he had received from the Saka kings. Siraces further said, "By the eternal fire and the sacred water, I swear I will exact my revenge." Then addressing Darius, he added, "And it is in your power, by the means I will explain, to give the glorious revenge I ask. Tomorrow night the Sakas mean to shift their camps; I know the spot where they intend to position themselves and can conduct you to it by a nearer way than they will take; there you can encircle them completely. I am a horse-keeper and know every step of the country for many miles around. But it will be necessary to take with us water and provision for seven days. For this purpose order preparations to be made without any delay." Thereupon he conducted the Persian army in a march of seven days into the most barren and sandy part of the land. When both their water and provisions began to run short, Rhanosbates, the *hazārapatiš*, suspected the treachery of their guide . . . , and put him to death. Then Darius fixed his sceptre in the ground, tying round it his tiara and the royal diadem, and climbing a hill, implored Miθra [Polyaeus has Apollo] in this moment of distress to preserve his army and give them water. The god heard his prayers, and a plentiful shower ensued, which they received in hides and vases, and subsisted on it, till they reached the Bactros.

This is a romanticized version of the expedition of Darius against the Eastern Sakas in 520/519 B.C., which is told in the Behistun postscript,⁶³ and it presents the original Persian story of the self-mutilation trick (it recurs in A.D. 484 in Central Asia, and involves the falling of the Sasanian Pērōz into the trap of the Hephthalites⁶⁴).

Herodotus does not name any of his "Persian authorities," but he was, as G. Rawlinson said, "born and bred a Persian subject"⁶⁵ and had opportunities to draw on Persian materials transmitted by soldiers and officials whom he met at Sardis and other Iranian-dominated cities of Asia Minor. Cyrus' history from his birth to his conquest of Asia Minor, as well as the portion dealing with the Median history, reveals strong pro-Harpagus tendencies, and since we know that Harpagus founded an Irano-Lycian dynasty that ruled the Xanthos region until at least 380 B.C., we may assume that members of this house were the indirect source of Herodotus on those topics.⁶⁶ A good deal of Persian materials—both oral and documentary—relating to the accession of Darius, his recapture of Babylonia, and his expeditions, seems to have been transmitted to the Greeks by Zopyrus the Younger, whom Herodotus may have met in Athens when Zopyrus stayed there.⁶⁷ Another likely source, particularly concerning the internal affairs of the Achaemenid family, is the eunuch of Prince Sataspes, a nephew of Darius the Great. After the failure of the prince to carry out the project of circumnavigation, he "ran away with a great portion of his wealth and reached Samos, where a certain Samian seized the whole. I know the man's name, but I shall willingly forget it here."⁶⁸

Official Records and Saga Illustrations

Even had the Iranians not possessed a tradition of representing the deeds of heroes and gods on flat or carved objects, they would have had ample opportunity to learn from their Elamite, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian subjects who had been masters of saga illustration for over two millennia. By Achaemenid times this had become a conventional means of conveying historical or religious messages to the people, nearly all of whom were illiterate. The idea is well reflected in the record-relief ornamenting the façade of the tomb of Darius the Great in Naqsh-e Rostam. The representation shows Darius standing in adoration before his royal fire while above both hovers the winged-king symbolizing his royal God-given fortune (*Xʿarənah/Farnah*); Darius and his royal fire stand on pedestals which rest on a "monumental throne" (*gāθūm*) carried on the raised hands of thirty male figures typifying various subject na-

tions; flanking the throne are the "six helpers" of Darius.⁶⁹ The scene is meant to symbolize the Achaemenid Empire. Its extent and centralized but fair organization are manifest in the throne bearers, all depicted as units of a whole, and the mutual trust which existed between the Great King and his subjects is well borne out by the act of support given to the throne on which the unguarded king stands. The whole empire is the creation of the vigilant, righteous, brave, and nationalistic Iranians led by a Persian spearman, Darius himself.⁷⁰

Saith Darius the King: Ahuramazda, when he saw this earth in commotion, thereafter bestowed it upon me, made me king; I am king. By the will of Ahuramazda I put it on its foundation; what I said to them, that they did, as was my desire. If now thou shalt think: "How many are the countries which King Darius held?" look at the sculptures of those who bear the throne. Then shalt thou know; then shall it become known to thee: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to thee: a Persian man [= Darius] has delivered battle far indeed from Persia.

When we remember that the sculptured scene shone with brilliant colors,⁷¹ we can imagine the effect it had upon the beholder.

The same historical message was conveyed by the Behistun relief and the Persepolitan friezes. One notes that in these representations historical accuracy is impaired by the inability to show in a single scene various phases of an event or incidents forming a chain of events. Thus, the nine "kings" whom Darius vanquished at different times and in different places are all depicted bound together as a row of prisoners awaiting justice in front of Darius. The illustrations were, then, symbolic in nature, but their messages were clear to the observer.⁷²

With the conquest of Asia Minor the Persians subjugated the Ionians whose artists had a distinct tendency towards history and whose painters had celebrated historical battles in their works, such as the Lydian victory over the Magnesians by Bularchus.⁷³ This school flourished later under the Athenians, but it also served the Persian Empire. When Darius intended to cross into Europe and campaign against the European Scythians c. 513 B.C., Mandrocles, his Samian engineer, built him a bridge across the Bosphorus.

Darius was so pleased with the bridge thrown across the strait by the Samian Mandrocles, that he not only

bestowed upon him the customary presents but gave him ten of every kind. Mandrocles, by offering first fruits from these presents, caused a picture to be painted which showed the whole of the bridge, with King Darius sitting in a seat of honour, and his army engaging the passage. This painting he dedicated in the temple of Hera at Samos, attaching to it the following inscription:

"The fish-fraught Bosphorus bridged, to Hera's fane
Did Mandrocles this proud memorial bring;
When for himself a crown he'd skill to gain,
For Samos praise, contending the Great King."⁷⁴

No doubt a copy of such a memorial would have been presented to Darius himself. Indeed, there is ground for believing that favorable phases of the great Greco-Persian War were represented in several paintings and ornamented some parts of the Babylonian palaces of the Achaemenid kings.⁷⁵ It is likewise certain that in satrapies such as Babylonia and Egypt the Iranians had more occasion and facilities to have events of their history, sagas, or even daily life commemorated in paintings and carved representations. To this category belong the beautiful little sculpture depicting the funeral of an Iranian nobleman from Memphis,⁷⁶ and the interesting royal audience scenes painted on the inner side of the shields of Iranian generals who fought Alexander in the sculptured representation on the "Alexander Sarcophagus" from Sidon.⁷⁷ Imitating the Persepolitan examples, the painted scenes represent the very late Achaemenid models of a royal tradition—the king receiving his closest senior officials in a public audience. As in the case of oral traditions, so in illustrated subjects the sagas played a major role. This is clear not only from later histories of Iran but also from the story of Zariadres and Odates as related by Alexander's chamberlain, Chares of Mytilene as follows:⁷⁸ Anciently, there lived two brothers, Hystaspes and Zariadres by name; the former ruled Media and the lands below it, the latter the regions above the Caspian Gates up to the river Tanais. Their subjects stated that the two had been born of the love of Aphrodite and Adonis. Above the Tanais lived the Maratians, whose king, Humartes, had a remarkably beautiful daughter named Odates. "Of her it is recorded in the histories that she saw Zariadres in a dream and fell in love with him, while the same passion for her attacked him in the same way." Zariadres went after Odates and asked for her hand, but Humartes refused, not wishing to marry her to a

foreigner. Instead, shortly afterwards he held a marriage feast and invited his own relatives and noblemen in the hope that one of them would be chosen by Odates, who, it was arranged, would indicate her choice by offering him a cup of wine filled by herself. Upon discovering her father's intention, Odates sent word to Zariadres, and he, together with a charioteer, set out with the utmost haste, gallantly forded the Tanais, and arrived in a Scythian's costume in the feast hall just as Odates had run out of time and, weeping, was filling the cup. Then she discovered Zariadres and happily gave him her cup, and their marriage followed. Afterwards they went to Zariadres' land. Chares then comments,

Now this love affair is held in remembrance among the barbarians who live in Asia [i.e., the Persians, see n. 3] and it is exceedingly popular; in fact they picture this story in their temples and palaces and even in private dwellings; and most princes bestow the name Odates on their own daughters.

Since Hystaspes, Odates (Atossa), and Humartes are good Achaemenid names, it seems unjustified to connect the story at this stage with Kavi Vištāspa and his brother Zairi.vairi (as a later tradition did); still much later, a recension of the story connected it with King Pērōz.⁷⁹

Notes

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1. Herodotus, I, 1ff.

2. Hesychius: *lógiōs, ho tēs historías émpeiros*, "lógiōs: one who is versed in history."

3. For "Asia" designating the Persian empire see further Herodotus, I, 130; VII, 11; IX, 116, 122; Q. Curtius, III, 3: 3–4 etc. The claim was already Median: Herodotus, I, 108.

4. For the same reason Xerxes and his priests offered sacrifices to the heroes slain at Troy when in 480 B.C. the Persians passed by the site of the ancient city: Herodotus, VII, 43.

5. Since they had entered the scene some seven centuries after the fall of Troy, the Persians were availing themselves of an arbitrary pretext to explain their enmity towards the Greeks, but Herodotus insists that they did advance such reasoning (I, 1–5), and there is no need to suppose [e.g., W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, vol. 1, p. 53 [Oxford, many

eds.]] that he is reporting a Greek tale with no native Iranian foundation. Similarly, Darius the Great used the Scythian invasion of Media, which had taken place a century before his accession, to justify his campaign against the European Scythians: Herodotus, V, 1 with I, 118–19. Even more to the point, in A.D. 230, Ardašīr waged war against the Roman Alexander Severus pretending that he was avenging the death of Darius III whom the earlier Macedonian Alexander had vanquished: Herodian, VI, 2: 2; Dio Cassius, LXXX, 4: 1 with *The Letter of Tansar*, trans. M. Boyce (Rome, 1966), 65.

6. See especially Herodotus, III, 75; VII, 11.

7. Behistun, I, 8–11 (R. G. Kent, *Old Persian* [New Haven, 1953], 117).

8. Behistun, IV, 50–2 (*ibid.*, 129).

9. Herodotus, I, 132, states that when administering sacrifices for Persians, the Magi chants a hymn, which they say recounts the origin of gods. It has long been recognized that these *theogoníai* must have been similar to the Avestan *Yāsts*, which are hymns to ancient gods: E. Benveniste, *The Persian religion* (Paris, 1929), 31; A. Christensen, *Die Iranier* (Munich, 1933), p. 287, n. 6.

10. On the Median court poets (*ōidoí*) who drew their subject-matter from a traditional repertoire (*eithisména*), see below.

11. A pioneer work on the Perso-Avestan names was Ph. Keiper's "Les nomes propres perso-avestiques," *Muséon* 4 (1884–1885), 221–29, 338–58.

12. Hutaosā/Atossa, daughter of Cyrus the Great and Hutaosa, the Queen of Kavi Vištāspa.

13. Damaspia, the Queen of Artaxerxes I.

14. Jāmāspa, the minister of Kavi Vištāspa, and the Persepolis Elamite tablets' Zamašba and Tammašba, see R. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago, 1969), 772.

15. Spəntō.dāta, son of Kavi Vištāspa, and Sphendatēs of Ctesias. His statement that this was the name of the Magus usurper whom Darius destroyed is disproved by the Behistun inscription, which names the Magus as Gaumāta; however, that the name Spəntō.dāta had become known in West Iran in historic times is thereby established, see W. B. Henning *apud* M. Boyce, *JRAS* (1957), p. 12, n. 2.

16. The Avestan Pišyaoθna, son of Kavi Vištāspa, and the Achaemenid Pissuthnes, son of Hystaspes (Thucydides, I, 115; III, 31), with J. Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* (Paris, 1892–1893; repr. 1960), vol. 2, p. 534, n. 196; and E. Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien* (Paris, 1966), pp. 123ff.

17. The Avestan Yima Xšaēta and the Elamite tablets' Yamakšedda (Hallock, *Persepolis*, 771–72, with variants; Benveniste, *Titres*, 96.

18. See J. Harmatta, "The Literary Patterns of the Babylonian Edict of Cyrus," *AAnASH* 19 (1971), 217–31.

19. This is implied by the inscription of Udjahorresne, the Egyptian admiral of Cambyses and Darius,

from Darius' letter to his satrap ordering him to gather wise men to codify old Egyptian laws (see below), and from other data not relevant here.

20. Cf. Darius' letter to Gadates with reference to his predecessors' policy toward Apollo; the Persians' siding with the Trojan cause (Herodotus, I, 1ff.; VII, 43); the mythical ancestorship of the Medes from Medea (Herodotus, VII, 64) and of the Persians from Perseus (VII, 61). See also below, n. 43.

21. Cf. Herodotus, III, 137, where Darius is said to have heard of and admired the mighty deeds of Milo, the wrestler.

22. Note Cyrus' enquiry concerning the Lacedaemonians (Herodotus, I, 153); Cambyses' regarding the Nubians (III, 17); Darius' on the Athenians (V, 105, 106), and on the men of Paeonia (V, 13); and Artaphernes' about the Athenians (V, 73).

23. Herodotus, I, 95.

24. For a full treatment of the Cyrus sagas see A. Bauer, *Die Kyrus-Saga und Verwandtes* (Vienna, 1888), and Shahbazi, *Cyrus the Great* (Shiraz, 1970).

25. Herodotus, I, 214.

26. See J. Marquart, "Die Assyrika des Ktesias," *Philologus*, suppl. vol. 6 (1895), 503–658; *The Fragments of Persika of Ktesias*, ed. J. Gilmore (London, 1888), and Ktesias' *La Perse, l'Inde—Les sommaires de Photius*, trans. R. Henry (Brussels, 1947).

27. Photius, epit. 1 (Gilmore, 122).

28. Tr. of Herodotus, vol. 1, p. 49.

29. *Diepnsophistae* XIV, 633bff.

30. Müller (ed.), *FHG*, vol. 2, 90.

31. *Cyropaedia*, I, 2: 1.

32. Strabo, *Geography* XV, 3: 18.

33. See Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian minstrel tradition," *JRAS* (1957), 10–47; add to her references on the *gōsān* the testimony of Ḥamzah, *Tārīḫ sennī mulāk al-arz wa'l-anbiyā'* (Berlin, 1922), 38.

34. Boyce, "The Parthian *gōsān*," 11.

35. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* IV, 6: 11.

36. Parnades *apud* Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* XVIII, 608a; cf. XII, 514b; Suidas, s.v. Mousourgoi.

37. *Persica* 52.

38. To the point that Greek athletes were invited to the Persian court as honored guests, see J. Hofstetter, *Die Griechen in Persien* (Berlin, 1978), nos. 57 and 269; cf. above, n. 21.

39. Cyrus: Arrian, *Anabasis* VII, 29: 4; Achaemenes (see below); Artachaees, Herodotus, VII, 21, 117; Masisstius, *ibid.*, IX, 24.

40. Cf. Christensen, *Die Iranier*, 297.

41. A good case is the story of Darius and his horse, on which see C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Klio* 28 (1923), 59–64.

42. See G. Rawlinson, trans. of *Herodotus*, vol. 4, p. 252, with all references.

43. Beautifully attested in Aeschylus' *Persae*, ll. 180–90.

44. Herodotus, VII, 150: prior to his expedition against Greece, Xerxes sent an envoy to the Argives to deliver the following message: "Men of Argos, King Xerxes speaks thus to you: 'We Persians deem that Perse from whom we descend was the child of Perseus, the son of Danae, and of Andromeda, the daughter of Cepheus. Hereby it would seem that we came of your stock and lineage; nor can it be right for you to fight, on behalf of others, against us.'"

45. Aelian, *On the nature of animals* XII, 21.

46. See Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VIII, 1: 4; *Anabasis* I, 10: 12; Q. Curtius, III, 3: 16; see further Shahbazi, "An Achaemenid symbol II," *AMI*, NF. 13 (1980), 137–39.

47. Herodotus, I, 96ff.

48. Herodotus, I, 107ff., with Shahbazi, *Cyrus the Great*, chap. III.

49. Herodotus, I, 114.

50. Shahbazi, *The Irano-Lycian Monuments* (Tehran, 1975), 69–70.

51. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad-i Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāʾib al-maxlūqāt wa qarāʾib al-mawjūdāt*, ed. M. Sitūdeh (Tehran, 1965), 470–71; see also Barthold, *ZDMG* 98 (1944), 157, for another reference.

52. Dinon, *FHG*, vol. 2, 90 = Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* XIV, 633bff.

53. Parthenius (1st century B.C.), *Love Stories* 22, in J. Griffiths Podlev, *Ancient Literary Sources on Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), no. 118.

54. Cf. K. M. Atkinson, "The Legitimacy of Cambyses and Darius as Kings of Egypt," *JAOS* 76 (1956), 167.

55. Herodotus, III, 1ff.

56. For the creation of the Old Persian cuneiform script under Darius the Great see pt. III of my *Historiography*.

57. Herodotus, III, 80–88.

58. Herodotus, III, 79, substantiated, for once, by Ktesias, *Persica* i5 (=46 in Gilmore, 149).

59. As Marquart saw: *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte von Eran*, fasc. 2 (Leipzig, 1905), 234ff. Against the objections of L. Gray (in Hastings' *ERE*, vol. 5, 875a) and then of Henning (*JRAS* [1944], 134ff.); see J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *BSOAS* 13 (1950), p. 638, n. 2; W. Eilers, *Der alte Name des persischen Neujahrfestes* (Wiesbaden, 1953); G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart, 1965), 119, 139; and more recently, A. Dietz, "Baga and Miθra in Sogdiana." In *Acta Iranica* 17 (Tehran, 1978), 111–14.

60. Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. E. Sachau (London, 1879), 207ff.; Firdausī, *Shāh-nāmeḥ*, Moscow ed., vol. 1, pp. 65ff.

61. This story will be dealt with in detail in another article.

62. *Strateg.* VII, 11: 8.

63. Behistun, V, 20ff.

64. Th. Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*, 2nd ed. (1920), p. 3, no. 10 with reference.

65. Trans. of *Herodotus*, vol. 1, p. 62f.

66. Shahbazi, *Irano-Lycian Monuments*, 69–70.
67. J. Wells, "The Persian Friends of Herodotus," *JHS* 27 (1907), 37–47.
68. Herodotus, IV, 43.
69. For the interpretation of the scene see Shahbazi, "Achaemenid Symbol," p. 125.
70. Kent, *Old Persian*, 138.
71. Cf. E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, vol. 3 (Chicago, 1970), 83.
72. P. Calmeyer, *Iran* 18 (1980), 56.
73. See Pliny, *Natural History* VII, 126; XXXV, 55, with E. B. Harrison, "The Composition of the Amazonomachy on the Shield of Athena Parthenos," *Hesperia* 35 (1966), 106–35, esp. 126.
74. Herodotus, IV, 88.
75. Shahbazi, *Irano-Lycian Monuments*, 90–91.
76. F. W. von Bissing, "Totenstele eines persischen Grossen aus Memphis," *ZDMG* 84 (1930), 226–38.
77. Volkmar von Graev, *Der Alexandersarkophag und seine Werkstatt* (Berlin, 1970), 102ff.
78. *Apud* Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* XIII, 575a–d, with Boyce, *BSOAS* 17 (1955), 471ff.
79. For details see Ibn Isfandyār, *Tārīx-i Ṭabaristān*, ed. 'A. Iqbāl (Tehran, 1320/1941), 62–72.